Mission, Strategies and Actions

Mission Statement

The Ministry of Environment provides public service excellence in protecting the environment and promoting sustainable use of natural resources to enhance economic and social benefits.

Enhance environmental protection

Strategy

A healthy and productive environment

Key Actions

- Maintain productivity and biological diversity through protecting and renewing Saskatchewan's forests.
- Protect the pristine waters of the northern boreal watersheds from the impacts of development through baseline assessment, monitoring for change and assessment of risks resulting from development.
- Protect source water through treatment and management of waste water, monitoring of industrial facilities and compliance programs.
- Maintain Saskatchewan's air quality through airshed management, monitoring, use of good quality data, partnerships and national programs.

Strategy

Impacts on the environment are minimized

Key Actions

- Continue to identify, protect and manage sites within the Provincial Representative Areas Network.
- Reduce greenhouse gas emissions and increase capacity to adapt to the impacts of climate change, while accommodating economic growth, through promoting investment in low-carbon technologies and supporting the development of cost-effective mitigation and adaptation solutions.
- Ensure that development and industrial activity proceed in a manner that protects the environment and human health and safety through environmental assessment and compliance activities.
- Ensure effective solid waste management via landfills, transfer stations and recycling programs.

Photo Credit: Ministry of Tourism, Parks, Culture and Sport, photo by Paul Austring, Buffalo Narrows

Enhance service quality

Strategy

Ministry service is client-focused

Key Actions

- Ensure ministry clients have multiple options to access services through channels such as the Client Service Office, on-line portals, in-person and telephone service.
- Ensure the provision of safe drinking water through inspections, monitoring and reporting.
- Protect public safety by focusing wildfire suppression activity on protecting people as the highest priority.

Photo Credit: Enterprise Saskatchewan, Greg Huszar Photography: Mosaic Belle Plaine site

Facilitate economic growth

Strategy

Regulatory environment is timely, clear and encourages innovation

Key Actions

- Implement the Saskatchewan Environmental Code to be followed by anyone conducting activities regulated under environmental legislation in Saskatchewan.
- Fulfill the legal duty to consult with First Nations and Métis people when ministry actions or decisions may have an adverse impact on Aboriginal or Treaty rights and traditional uses through implementation of the province's Consultation Policy Framework.
- Maximize provincial-federal cooperation/coordination to minimize overlap and duplication through agreements and memorandums of understanding.

Strategy

Sustainable allocation of natural resources

Key Actions

- Lead land use planning processes that inform development and resource allocation decisions that are supported by diverse stakeholder and user groups.
- Develop a harvest plan for fish and wildlife that supports commercial and recreational use.
- Provide appropriate development and use opportunities on Crown resource lands through the review, approval and management of land use dispositions.
- Facilitate land acquisition by Treaty Land Entitlement First Nations and First Nations with Specific Claim agreements.
- Support a sustainable forest sector through the allocation of wood fibre, encouraging diversification of forest products and services and encouraging the use of biomass.
- Prioritize wildfire suppression for the marketable timber supply in Saskatchewan.

Photo Credit: Tourism Saskatchewan, Greg Huszar Photography, Dock Jumpers

Improve transparency and accountability

Strategy

Information about the environment is timely, accurate and readily available

Key Actions

- Credible measurement, reporting and verification data are available on the ministry website.

Strategy

People, businesses and communities understand, support and comply with environmental regulations

Key Actions

- Finalize the development and implementation of the Ministry's Compliance and Enforcement Plan in a manner that supports the results-based regulatory framework.
- Develop and deliver educational materials and workshops on the new environmental regulatory framework.

Photo Credit: Tourism Saskatchewan, Devona Hill Photography, Rolling Pines Golf and Country Resort

Pursue continuous improvement

Strategy

The ministry seeks better ways to do things

Key Actions

- Review, prepare and implement a modern Wildfire Management Act to better manage provincial wildfire activities.
- Apply Lean principles to lead to efficiencies in the delivery of ministry services.

Strategy

Programs and services are effective, efficient and regularly evaluated

Key Actions

- Review processes used for land use planning.
- Evaluate field office locations and staff capacity to optimize delivery of ministry programs and services.
- Maintain the Environmental Management System certification through continual improvement of the forestry program activities, products and services.

Strategy

The ministry uses information and knowledge effectively

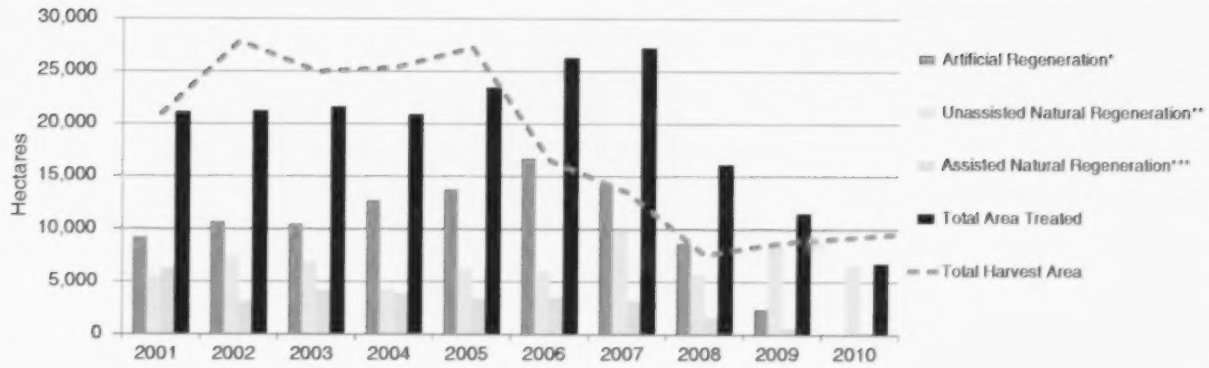
Key Actions

- Establish certifications and/or designations for technical and scientific positions in conjunction with the appropriate association.
- Participate in inter-provincial forums at the technical and policy development level to help ensure that environmental protection and resource management programming and requirements are current, consistent and defendable.

Performance Measures

Measure

Number of hectares of forest harvest areas treated



** Artificial regeneration consists of planting of seedlings primarily on spruce forest types*
*** Unassisted Natural regeneration occurs primarily on aspen forest types*
**** Assisted Natural Regeneration consists of a mechanical scarification of the harvest area and occurs primarily on pine types*
Source: Ministry of Environment

Measure Description

Provincially, the renewal of forests following harvesting activities is performed primarily by the forest industry as a condition of their forestry licenses. *The Forest Resources Management Act* requires that all harvested forest areas be renewed. Prior to industry taking over responsibility for forest renewal in the mid-1980s, forest renewal was the responsibility of the province. The Ministry of Environment funds a program for renewing forest on these older, historical harvest areas that did not renew successfully when originally harvested.

Forest renewal is a critical component in maintaining a healthy and productive forest and environment. The capture of carbon in regenerating forests is an important sink for CO_2. The photosynthetic activities of forests are important for the production of oxygen in the air we breathe. New growth in regenerating forests provides important forage for large animals and a mix of regenerating and mature forest provides a wide range of habitats to support a variety animals and plants.

The boreal forest of Saskatchewan is an ecosystem primarily driven by disturbance. This means that forests will naturally renew themselves following major disturbance events, such as fire. Commercial harvesting of forests is similar to natural disturbance, but some important differences exist. For this reason, forest renewal activities can require tree planting and tending activity on recently harvested areas to ensure proper regeneration.

Photo Credit: Tourism Saskatchewan, Davin Andrie, Hunt Falls

Measure Description Continued

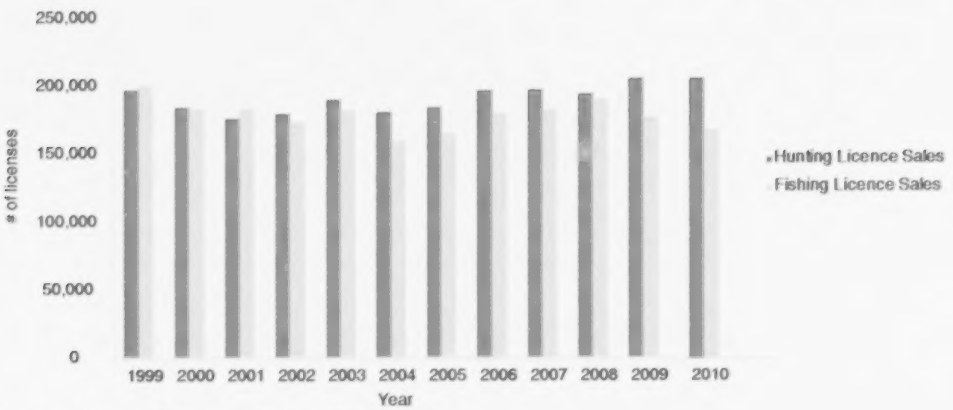
Trends in the data over the past decade show a marked increase in the use of natural regeneration (assisted and unassisted) over planting. This has occurred for several reasons. Natural regeneration of harvested areas is much less expensive than planting and, in the case of pine, leads to similar renewal success. The past decade has also seen the increased use of aspen forest types as the product mix produced in Saskatchewan mills has changed. Aspen stands are best renewed using natural regeneration techniques, so a shift towards harvesting more aspen will also mean a shift towards more natural regeneration. Finally the trend over the past few years has been for less harvest, therefore less forest to regenerate. This is a direct result of the continuing struggles of the forestry sector following the collapse of the US housing market in 2006.

The primary risk for renewal is not that the forest will not renew properly (as left to its own devices, forest will regenerate in most cases) but that the forest will not regenerate to the species that were harvested. For both ecological and economic sustainability reasons it is important to maintain the forest types that were found on the landscape prior to harvesting. The forest industry is diligent in meeting its commitments to forest renewal and the Ministry works with the forest industry to ensure it is continuing to do so.

Photo Credit: Tourism Saskatchewan, Greg Huszar Photography, Fishing on Jan Lake

Measure

Number of hunting and angling licences sold



Source: Ministry of Environment, Fish and Wildlife Branch

Measure Description

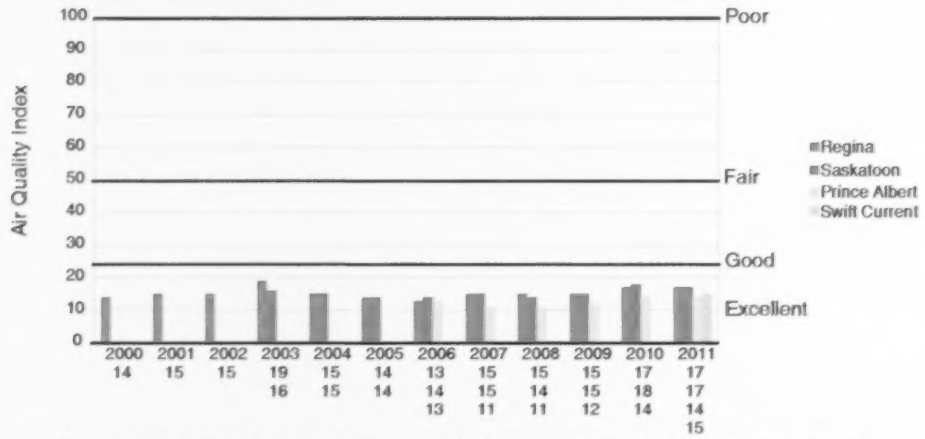
Hunting and angling are of social, cultural and economic importance in Saskatchewan. Licence sales are tracked annually and serve both as an indicator of short- and long-term interest in these activities and as an indication of the importance of hunting and fishing to the economic health of the province. Measuring the number of licences sold helps to determine the priority areas for population assessments and to manage competing interests of users. As such, this measure aligns with the Ministry's strategies of enhancing environmental protection and facilitating economic growth.

The Ministry has experienced high levels of participation in angling and hunting activities by members of the public in the past, which supports continued focus on wildlife and fisheries resources conservation and management.

Photo Credit: Ministry of Tourism, Parks, Culture and Sport, photo by Paul Austring, Blue Sky over Duck Mountain

Measure

Air Quality Index



Source: Ministry of Environment, Technical Resources Unit (also available online at www.environment.gov.sk.ca/airqualityindex

Measure Description

The Air Quality Index (AQI) is a communication tool designed to describe the general air quality in urban areas by transforming ambient measurements of sulphur dioxide, nitrogen dioxide, ozone, carbon monoxide and particulates into a single number or descriptive term that represents the measured quality of the air. The index is also used to monitor long-term trends in air quality. Measuring and evaluating urban air quality is an important step in meeting the Ministry's objective of ensuring clean air. Maintaining air quality is fully aligned with the Ministry's strategies to enhance environmental protection and to improve transparency and accountability. This measure is an essential tool to monitor air quality trends and a basis for making rough comparisons of air quality in different urban areas.

Saskatchewan's overall approach to managing air quality is through: permits issued pursuant to the *Clean Air Act/ Regulations* and *The Potash Refining Air Emissions Regulations*; the environmental assessment process; air quality monitoring and reporting; ambient air quality standards; air dispersion modeling; airshed management; compliance and enforcement; communications and research.

The Ministry has established air monitoring stations in Regina, Saskatoon, Prince Albert and, most recently, Swift Current (the Swift Current AQI is reported here for the first time). The Ministry recently relocated its air monitoring station in La Loche to Buffalo Narrows to better measure long-range acidic compounds in the atmosphere. The Ministry is also in the process of establishing a new air monitoring station in North Battleford. The AQI indexes for Regina, Saskatoon, Prince Albert, Swift Current and La Loche have consistently rated as good to excellent and there has been a relatively stable trend in this measure. The AQI for Buffalo Narrows and North Battleford will be assessed once stations are up and running and sufficient data is available.

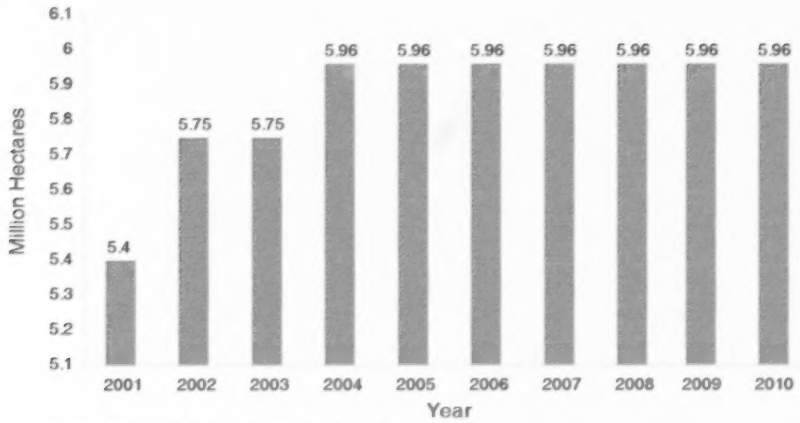
The graph above provides the AQI for those stations that are a part of the National Air Pollution Surveillance Program; however, data for all sites is available on the website at www.environment.gov.sk.ca/airqualityindex.

The key risks to the AQI reported at the stations comes from both natural sources (such as forest fires) and from human-caused sources (such as open burning or air contaminants from industrial sources).

Photo Credit: Tourism Saskatchewan, Greg Huszar Photography, Jones Peak, near Eastend

Measure

Number of hectares in the Representative Areas Network



Source: Ministry of Environment, Land Branch

Measure Description

The Representative Areas Network (RAN) is intended to conserve representative and unique landscapes throughout the 11 ecoregions of the province. The RAN includes designated Crown lands that have been given a level of protection by virtue of legislation and private lands that are managed for biodiversity by agreement. The measure of the number of hectares in the RAN is an indicator of the province's commitment to supporting the protection and retention of native habitat and of long-term ecological health and aligns with the key actions of maintaining a healthy and productive environment and minimizing impacts on the environment. Establishing protected areas is seen in the international science community as a "natural solution" and a powerful tool against carbon emissions and possibly climate change. RAN areas also serve to help maintain biodiversity and act as benchmarks when compared to managed landscapes.

There are challenges in adding significant numbers of hectares to the RAN. In agricultural portions of the province, the vast majority of land is privately held and additions to the RAN are achieved in small quantities. In northern Saskatchewan, even though Crown land dominates, many interests must be considered and weighed to achieve a balance between conservation and economic development.

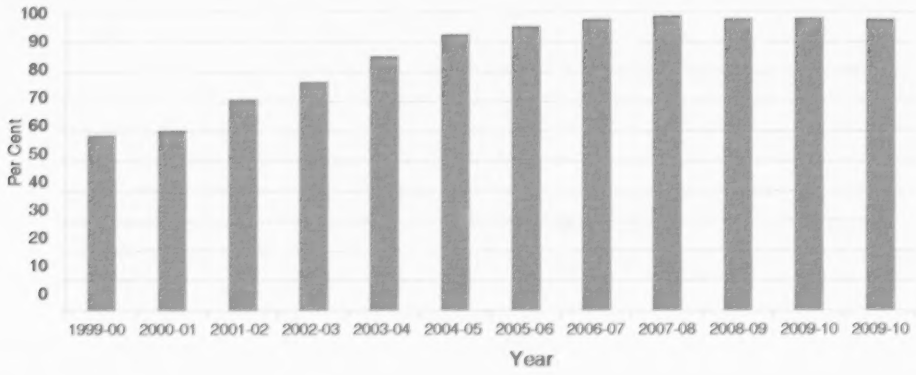
The greatest risk to achieving the RAN targets are increasing development pressures and the resulting developments that either decrease the ecological value of the land or take up lands fully so that they are not representative of a natural landscape. As well, lack of support for protected areas by some users is also a risk.

The number of hectares in the Representative Areas Network remains unchanged; however, a number of sites have been identified within integrated land use plans and, as these land use plans are approved and recommendations for designation of proposed representative areas are implemented, hectares will be added.

Photo Credit: Tourism Saskatchewan, Hans-Gerhard Pfaff, Downtown Regina

Measure

Drinking Water Quality Compliance Standards



Source: Ministry of Environment, Municipal Branch, SEEMS Database

Measure Description

The drinking water quality compliance indicator is an average of compliance with disinfection and bacteriological standards, both of which measure compliance with drinking water quality standards. This indicator looks at both the results of bacteriological water quality monitoring and the level of disinfectant present in drinking water and is a good predictor of the safety of drinking water. Compliance with drinking water quality standards for disinfection and bacteriological quality is important as contamination in water supplies can result in significant illness within a short period of time and proper disinfection of drinking water is an important way to ensure safe drinking water and prevent the outbreak of waterborne diseases.

The indicator reports on the actions of the Ministry in addressing the strategy to prevent and reduce risks to the health of people and the environment and key actions related to ensuring safe and sustainable drinking water. The accuracy of this indicator is fully dependent on accurate testing and reporting by regulated waterworks operators.

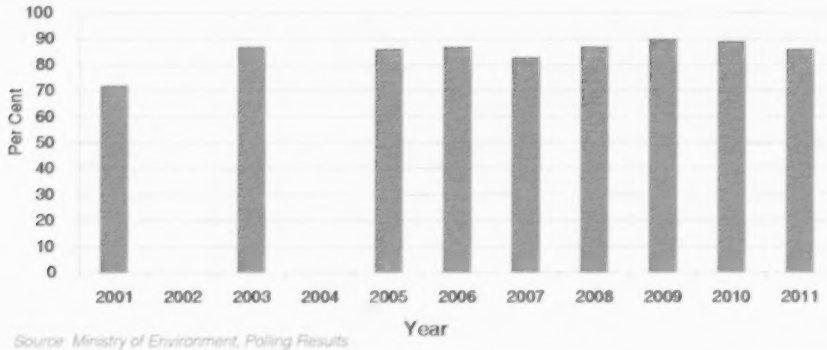
The drinking water quality compliance indicator has been very good for the past few years and has remained relatively stable. The Ministry will continue to reinforce the need to comply with disinfection requirements and proper reporting of disinfection values in 2012-13 and beyond to ensure increased awareness. Ongoing inspection and education awareness initiatives with waterworks owners and operators are planned to sustain good performance in achieving water that is safe from bacteriological threats and meets disinfection standards.

Key risks to achieving this measure include an inability of waterworks owners or operators to comply with standards and operator certification requirements (such as a lack of staff, understanding, overall planning capacity or financial resources), catastrophic events that effect drinking water quality (such as major flooding or equipment failure) and new/evolving standards that change the base requirements.

Photo Credit: Tourism Saskatchewan, Greg Huszar Photography, Nesslin Lake Campground

Measure

Drinking Water Quality Satisfaction



Source: Ministry of Environment, Polling Results

Measure Description

The Drinking Water Quality Satisfaction indicator is based on the results of annual omnibus polling of Saskatchewan residents on their level of confidence in the quality of their drinking water supply. The measure is actually the per cent of survey respondents indicating that they are very or somewhat confident in the quality of their tap water. This indicator reflects upon the success of the Ministry in advancing safe drinking water at various public drinking water supplies (municipalities, pipelines, large commercial water systems) across the province.

The indicator reports on the actions of the Ministry in addressing strategies of preventing and reducing risks to the health of people and the environment and key actions related to ensuring safe and sustainable drinking water. The accuracy of the indicator is limited by the accuracy of polling methods and consistency in the questions asked.

Ongoing attention to actions such as consumer education efforts, waterworks inspections, implementation of water quality standards, water workshops and consumer notification will help to maintain a high level of public confidence in the safety of drinking water in the future.

The drinking water quality satisfaction indicator has been greater than 80 per cent since 2003. Based on a May 2011 poll conducted by the Ministry of Environment, 85.5 per cent of people polled strongly agreed or agreed that they are confident in the safety of their own drinking water. These polling results continue to show a high level of confidence and the 2.2 per cent decrease in 2011 is within a margin of error. The results are 13.5 per cent greater than December 2001, when 72 per cent of people surveyed were very or somewhat confident in the quality of their tap water. In future surveys, the ministry will drill down in the survey questions in order to provide some understanding into the reason that some survey respondents are reporting a decrease in confidence in the quality of their drinking water.

Key risks to achieving this measure include lack of public knowledge about the effectiveness of drinking water quality compliance requirements and efforts, major climatic events that impact base water quality and quantity (such as sustained droughts or major flooding) and upsets or significant problems at a waterworks for a major centre in or beyond the province that influence the confidence of a significant portion of the population in Saskatchewan. There is also some risk in how the survey is constructed (for instance, the order in which questions are asked and the possibility that other topics covered included in the survey might influence the respondents' answers).

Photo Credit: Tourism Saskatchewan, David Buckley, Canoeing, MacFarlane River

Highlights

The following are key announcements being made in the 2012-13 Budget:

- With 2011-12 being the final year of the Government's four-year, $40 million additional commitment to the Go Green Fund, the Ministry sees a reduction in its Go Green funding in 2012-13; however, it will continue to use the remaining $4.5 million to fund third-party projects aimed at greenhouse gas emissions reductions, water conservation, biodiversity conservation, renewable energy and energy conservation.
- The 2012-13 budget includes $1million for the second year of the Boreal Water Management Project, which was previously funded through Go Green. The purpose of this project is to monitor water quality in the northern part of the province, which hosts some of the highest-quality fresh water resources in the world.
- The budget includes $21.8million for SARCAN to support their operation of the Beverage Container Collection and Recycling Program.
- To support the move to result-based regulation, $4million in capital funding has been allocated to continue the Ministry's work on the application processing and permissions management system to improve client interactions with the Ministry and shorten processing turnaround times. The funding will also be used to begin work on the environmental information management system and the compliance and enforcement management system.
- To support a comprehensive forest plantation tending program and increase the survival and performance of planted seedlings, the Ministry's budget includes an additional $800,00 in its reforestation budget. This will help the Ministry meet its contractual obligations for reforestation within the Pasquia-Porcupine Forest Management Area.
- The variable fire budget is decreasing by $2.5million in 2012-13; however, the Ministry will continue to manage fires based on its fire management strategies, with priority on public safety, communities, viable commercial timber and other values at risk.

For More Information

Please visit the Ministry's website at www.environment.gov.sk.ca for more information on the Ministry's programs and services.

Front Page Photo Credits

Canola and flax fields	*Biking, Narrow Hills Provincial Park*	*Motherwell Homestead National Historic Site of Canada*	*Saskatchewan Legislative Building*
Photographer, Charles Melnick	*Greg Huszar Photography*	*Greg Huszar Photography*	*Greg Huszar Photography*